

**Amendments to the Claims:**

The following listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

1. (Currently Amended) A method for manufacturing a mask blank having a ~~thin~~ light semi-transmitting film for forming a mask pattern on a transparent substrate, comprising:

forming a ~~thin~~ light semi-transmitting film on the transparent substrate by sputtering a sputtering target comprising metal and ~~silicon~~ silicon, to deposit the ~~thin~~ light semi-transmitting film comprising metal, silicon, and at least one of oxygen and nitrogen onto the transparent substrate by reactive sputtering in an atmosphere comprising at least one of an oxygen gas and a nitrogen gas;

wherein the sputtering target has a hardness of ~~900HV~~ 1100 HV or more in Vickers' hardness, and contains silicon in an amount from more than 80 mol% to 95 ~~mol%~~ mol%, and

the metal comprised in the sputtering target is molybdenum or tungsten.

2-4. (Canceled)

5. (Currently Amended) The method for manufacturing the mask blank according to claim 1, wherein ~~the thin film is a light semi-transmitting film~~ and the mask blank is a phase shift mask blank.

6. (Currently Amended) The method for manufacturing the mask blank according to claim 1, further comprising:

forming a metal film on the ~~thin~~ light semi-transmitting film.

7. (Currently Amended) A method for manufacturing a transfer mask by patterning the ~~thin~~ light semi-transmitting film of the mask blank manufactured by the manufacturing method of claim 1.

8. (Currently Amended) A sputtering target for manufacturing a mask blank by a reactive sputtering method, the sputtering target comprising metal and silicon and having a hardness of ~~900 HV~~ 1100 HV or more in Vickers' hardness, wherein

silicon is from more than 80 mol% to 95 mol% of the sputtering ~~target~~ target,  
and

the metal comprised in the sputtering target is molybdenum or tungsten.

9. (Previously Presented) The sputtering target for manufacturing the mask blank according to claim 8, wherein the sputtering target comprises a metal silicide compound.

10. (Canceled)

11. (Currently Amended) A method for manufacturing a phase shift mask blank, comprising:

sputtering a target comprising metal and silicon, the target containing silicon in an amount from more than 80 mol% to 95 mol%, in an atmosphere comprising at least one of oxygen and nitrogen to deposit a light semi-transmitting film comprising metal, silicon, and at least one of oxygen and nitrogen on a transparent substrate,

wherein based on a correlation between a rate of generating defects in the light semi-transmitting film and a hardness of the target where an increase in the degree of hardness of the target correlates to a decrease in the rate of generating defects, the light semi-transmitting film is deposited with the target having a hardness from ~~900HV to 1400HV~~ 1100 HV to 1400 HV in Vickers' hardness so that the rate of generating the defects is set to be a desired value or ~~less~~ less, and

the metal comprised in the sputtering target is molybdenum or tungsten.

12-14. (Canceled)

15. (Previously Presented) The method for manufacturing the mask blank according to claim 1, further comprising:

sintering metal silicide and silicon powders to form the sputtering target.

16. (Previously Presented) The method for manufacturing the mask blank according to claim 15, wherein sintering is performed at a heating temperature of 1300°C or less.

17. (Currently Amended) The method for manufacturing the mask blank according to claim 1, further comprising:

cleaning the ~~thin~~ light semi-transmitting film after the ~~thin~~ light semi-transmitting film is formed.

18. (Canceled)

19. (Currently Amended) The method for manufacturing the mask blank according to claim 1, wherein:

~~the thin film is a light semi-transmitting film;~~ the light semi-transmitting film has a transmittance of 9% to 20% for an exposure wavelength; and

the mask blank is a phase shift mask blank.

20. (Canceled)

21. (Currently Amended) The method for manufacturing the mask blank according to claim 1, wherein the ~~thin~~ light semi-transmitting film comprises metal, silicon, oxygen, and nitrogen, and is formed by the reactive sputtering in the atmosphere containing more of the nitrogen gas than the oxygen gas.

22. (Currently Amended) The method for manufacturing the mask blank according to claim 1, wherein the ~~thin~~ light semi-transmitting film is formed by the reactive sputtering in

the atmosphere comprising at least one of carbon, fluorine, and helium in addition to at least one of the nitrogen gas and the oxygen gas.

23. (Canceled)

24. (Currently Amended) The method for manufacturing the mask blank according to claim 1, wherein the metal comprised in the sputtering target excludes ~~tantalum~~, and the sputtering target has a hardness of 1100HV or more in Vickers' hardness. tantalum.

25. (Canceled)

26. (Currently Amended) The sputtering target for manufacturing the mask blank according to claim 8, wherein the metal comprised in the sputtering target excludes ~~tantalum~~, and the sputtering target has a hardness of 1100HV or more in Vickers' hardness. tantalum.